



**Minnesota World  
Language  
Proficiency  
Certificates**

**February 2008**

**Report  
To the  
Legislature**

**As required by  
Minn. Laws 2007  
Regular Session  
Chapter 146  
Article 2  
Section 39**

**COMMISSIONER:**

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**Minnesota  
World  
Language  
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Upon request, this report can be made available in alternative formats.

2008

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT ON  
MINNESOTA WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATES**

**MINNESOTA LAWS 2007, REGULAR SESSION CHAPTER 146, ARTICLE 2, SECTION 39**

**ESTIMATED COST OF PREPARING THIS REPORT**

This report required the collection of information that the Minnesota Department of Education does not collect as part of its normal business functions. It was therefore necessary to gather and analyze information in order to prepare this report. The cost of preparing this report includes estimates of the department's information collection costs as well as the estimated costs of the providers of the information.

Special funding was not appropriated to cover the costs of preparing this report.

The following is an estimate of the cost incurred by the Minnesota Department of Education: \$5,073.

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This report will be available to the public on the Minnesota Department of Education Website: <http://www.education.state.mn.us>

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# MINNESOTA WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATES

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## **MINNESOTA WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATES**

### **PURPOSE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate is a mechanism for recognizing, valuing and celebrating all students who achieve oral and written communicative competence in more than one language. It is created to encourage two population groups toward the goal of plurilingualism: for English speakers to develop skills in world language(s) and for English Language Learners to not only develop English skills but also to maintain and develop proficiency in their native language(s).

This certificate was a recommendation from the Chinese Language Programs report to the legislature in January 2007. The idea was developed by the Department of Education in consultation with the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota, the World Language Quality Teaching Network and English Language Learner Supervisors from Minneapolis and Saint Paul Schools.

The Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate is a motivator for world language students to complete extended sequences of language study. The prevalent trend in high schools is for students to stop after completing two years of study. This amount of time commitment does not result in the achievement of useable language skills. The World Language Proficiency Certificate is an incentive for students and districts to set a language goal of more intense rigor resulting in the attainment of real-world relevant language skills.

The Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate also motivates those students who already speak languages other than English to maintain and further develop their valuable language skills. In the case where students speak a language but do not read or write it, the Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate motivates them to develop literacy in their native language. The certificate recognizes native language proficiency as a valued asset.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has defined proficiency levels with descriptors of what language learners are able to do at each level. Appendix A lists these levels and descriptors for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The standard for a district to award the Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate is for students to demonstrate Intermediate-Low oral and written skills using the criteria established by ACTFL. Special consideration is given to languages recognized as more difficult for English speakers (Arabic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin) where the standard is set at Intermediate-Low for oral language and Novice-High for written language. American Sign Language candidates must demonstrate Intermediate-Low proficiency skills in both receptive and expressive communication modes.

A second certificate, the Minnesota World Language Proficiency High Achievement Certificate, will recognize those students who go well beyond the standard demonstrating oral and written language proficiency at the Pre-Advanced Level for K-12 Learners. Special consideration is given to languages recognized as more difficult for English speakers (Arabic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin) where the high achievement standard is set at Pre-Advanced for oral language and Intermediate-Mid for written language. American Sign Language candidates must demonstrate Pre-Advanced proficiency skills in both receptive and expressive communication modes.

Any district or charter school wanting to award the Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate must meet the minimum standards set by the state. The required language proficiency skills must be demonstrated on a valid and reliable proficiency assessment. These

consistencies are essential to maintaining equitable value to the certificates given across the state.

## **A Report on MINNESOTA WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATES**

### **A. Legislative Requirement**

In compliance with Minnesota Education Act 2007, Chapter 146, Article 2, Subdivision 39, the Minnesota Department of Education submits this report to the Minnesota Legislature.

**Minnesota Education Act 2007, Chapter 146, Article 2, Subdivision 43, states:**

*The Department of Education, in consultation with interested stakeholders, must develop and recommend to the legislature by February 15, 2008, the standards and process for awarding bilingual and multilingual certificates to those kindergarten through grade 12 students who demonstrate and maintain a requisite level of proficiency in multiple languages.*

*Minnesota Education Act of 2007, Chapter 146, Article 2, Section 39*

**Minnesota Law also states that:**

*World Languages teachers and other school staff should develop and implement world languages programs that acknowledge and reinforce the language proficiency and cultural awareness that non-English language speakers already possess, and encourage students' proficiency in multiple world languages.*

*Minnesota Statute 120B.024*

### **B. Precedent and Need**

Minnesota law allows districts the capacity to award high school credit for learning demonstrated through assessment for coursework that is offered in the district's curriculum. The process for earning credit for language learning is a local decision. The World Language Proficiency Certificate may or may not be connected to a district's policy and procedure for earning credit.

The World Language Proficiency Certificate encourages granting credit by assessment. The certificate recognizes languages and levels of language learning that may not currently be offered as courses in the district. It recognizes all language learning and encourages learners to set a high standard for their own personal achievement. Setting statewide standards and process guidelines for the certificate maintains the consistency of expectations and how achievement is defined. A common statewide definition facilitates the collaboration among districts on assessments and processes. This is especially useful for the less commonly taught languages who frequently do not have colleagues in the same district or geographic location.

Other states recognize world language achievement by awarding a special diploma for completion of especially rigorous coursework. Minnesota has a single diploma system. The World Language Proficiency Certificate is a way that Minnesota can recognize exceptional student achievement.

#### *Intended Student Population*

World Language Proficiency Certificates can be earned by any kindergarten to grade 12 student. There are multiple pathways to achieving language proficiency. The certificate will recognize any student achieving the designated level of language proficiency, no matter which pathway is taken to achieve this accomplishment.

The following is a list of possible pathways.

- Students who study a sequence of world language coursework
- Students who acquire language proficiency in an immersion school program or other settings
- Students who learn languages other than English in their home/community environments
- Students who come into our schools having been raised and sometimes schooled in a place where another language is spoken
- Additional paths may vary by district

### **C. Standards for Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificates**

A common standard is required for consistent value to the certificates awarded in districts throughout the state. A Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate is intended to be awarded based upon demonstrated oral and written proficiency, not upon credit, course grades or seat time. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has defined stages of language proficiency development for K-12 learners. They are Novice Low/Mid/High, Intermediate Low/Mid/ and Intermediate-High (also called Pre-Advanced in reference to K-12 learners). Appendix A lists these levels and describes the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills that correspond to each level. The standard set for the Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate is to demonstrate both oral and written language skills at ACTFL's Intermediate-Low level. A valid and reliable assessment tool must be used. Proficiency assessment examples are listed later in this report.

#### *Why designate Intermediate-Low?*

Intermediate-Low is a frequently referred benchmark in the language learning process. It marks a significant achievement characterized by the learner's ability to go beyond communication using memorized phrases to being able to express original thoughts in the new language. They can interact successfully in uncomplicated everyday situations. This level is sometimes called "communicative competence."

- Intermediate-Low is the level typically required by colleges and universities for students to demonstrate a smooth articulation from high school to college-credit bearing coursework.
- Intermediate-Low is recognized as a level where a language learner can function independently and continue on to even higher proficiency levels through literacy and experiential learning.
- Intermediate-Low is a realistic goal for students studying language for three to four years at the high school level or completing the equivalent content by starting earlier in a K-12 system.

#### *Allowance for Languages Recognized as more Difficult to Acquire*

The United States Foreign Service Institute categorized groups of languages based upon the length of time needed to attain varying levels of proficiency. Languages with writing systems very different from English are categorized as "exceptionally difficult for native English speakers": Arabic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin. See Appendix C for a list of several other languages by category. The standard for languages in the most difficult category is Intermediate-Low for listening and speaking and Novice-High for reading and writing.

#### *American Sign Language*

Minnesota recognizes American Sign Language (ASL) as a world language and therefore is included in this initiative. The standard for earning a World Language Proficiency Certificate in

ASL is demonstrated proficiency in both the receptive and expressive skills comparable to the rigor and communication skills designated for the spoken and written languages.

### *High Achievement Certificates*

A second certificate, the Minnesota World Language Proficiency High Achievement Certificate, will recognize those students who demonstrate oral and written language proficiency at the Pre-Advanced Level for K-12 Learners. At this proficiency level, a student is able to perform complex language tasks such as narrating or describing in various time frames or negotiate meaning in a situation with complications. Special consideration is given to languages recognized as more difficult for English speakers (Arabic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin) where the high achievement standard is set at Pre-Advanced for oral language and Intermediate-Mid for written language. American Sign Language candidates must demonstrate comparable Pre-Advanced proficiency skills in both receptive and expressive communication modes.

## **D. World Language Students**

Multiple pathways can lead students to the achievement of these goals. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has identified realistic language proficiency outcomes for students completing a variety of K-12 scheduling models.

The bar graph in Appendix C illustrates that levels Intermediate-Low or above can be expected for students completing K-12, K-8, 5-12, 7-12, or 9-12 articulated course sequences. Longer course sequences increase the probability that a greater number of students will develop this level of useable real-world language skills.

Pre-Advanced proficiency, the level required for a high achievement certificate, is the anticipated outcome for students in an articulated K-12 sequence or after several years in an immersion program. This level of proficiency can also be attained by students with extensive opportunities to use languages in their communities or abroad.

## **E. Native Language Speakers**

Our national security and competitiveness in a global marketplace depend upon developing a multilingual and multicultural literate citizenry. In January 2008, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) released a policy statement on the promotion of proficiency in languages other than English. "When home language skills are not encouraged or maintained, these language skills at best remain stunted and at worst are lost completely. Thus, a significant national resource is lost." (NASBE, 2008). Previous generations of global immigrants were told to "leave their language at the door." We are living in a new era when the multiple language skills of immigrants need to be viewed as an asset rather than a deficit.

The federal government invests hundreds of millions of dollars annually to teach languages to adults who work in commerce, agriculture, public health, diplomacy, and national defense. At the same time, U.S. schools do little to capitalize on the skills that many of their students, already fluent speakers of other languages, have mastered by the early grades. Unfortunately, the education system has a questionable policy regarding the maintenance of heritage or indigenous languages for those who have developed their skills outside the school. By building on the heritage that speakers bring to school, however, we can help all students become highly proficient in both English and one additional language. (Met, 2001)

Not only is it important to recognize native language skills, it is also important to encourage learners to maintain and develop their skills beyond the social level to the academic level needed for advanced study and professional-level language competencies. The World Language Proficiency Certificate acknowledges reaching high academic standards in both oral and written language. The literacy requirement will be a motivator and challenge for many students who can speak their native language but are not fluent in reading and writing of their native language.

This untapped national resource is being recognized from many perspectives. The National Virtual Translation Center, a US Bureau of Intelligence website, states that nationwide one in five children enter school speaking a language other than English and that most will speak that language haltingly by the time they reach adolescence. They have a head start on others who need to learn language “from scratch” yet their skills diminish over time. Dr. Stephen Krashen, internationally-recognized researcher on language acquisition, literacy and bilingual education, emphasizes the need to foster heritage language development. “Most people think that immigrants resist giving up their heritage or family language. Just the opposite is true: Heritage languages are lost rapidly, victims of language shift, a powerful process that favors the language of the new country over the language of the family.” Development of heritage language not only benefits the individual, it contributes to the economic health and national security of the country.

#### *Home Primary Languages in Minnesota Schools*

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) collects data on each public school student regarding the primary language spoken in their home (Home Primary Language). A spreadsheet with the numbers reported from each district is available at the Department of Education website ([http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Data/Data\\_Downloads/Student/Languages/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Data/Data_Downloads/Student/Languages/index.html)). The ten most common home primary languages in Minnesota are Arabic, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Oromo, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Appendix D shows maps with how these languages are represented in Minnesota counties.

## **F. LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENTS**

Several valid and reliable language proficiency assessments already exist for districts to use in determining the language proficiency level of their students. Work is currently being conducted for less commonly taught languages.

#### *Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments*

The Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA) were developed at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), one of the US Department of Education Language Resource Centers, located at the University of Minnesota. The MLPA assesses language proficiency at the Intermediate-Low and Intermediate-Mid levels in listening, reading, writing and speaking. A CD format of the MLPA is currently available at no charge to Minnesota school districts after teachers have attended training in administration of the MLPA and evaluation of student language samples. An online version is being developed with expected availability sometime in 2008. They are available in Spanish, French and German.

The MLPA is a prototype that can be used as a model for developing assessments in other languages. Minnesota has the expertise and local native-speaking populations to develop valid and reliable assessments for several additional languages represented in Minnesota’s K-12 school population. This is a long-term goal that with additional funding can begin pilot projects.

### *Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency*

The STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) is a web-based foreign language assessment developed by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon, another National Foreign Language Resource Center. It measures reading, writing and speaking proficiencies at six different levels: Novice-Low, Novice-Mid, Novice-High, Intermediate-Low, Intermediate-Mid and Intermediate-High/Pre-Advanced. Test items are generated by teachers, passed through a committee and then piloted to assure validity. STAMP is available in Spanish, French, German, Japanese and Chinese. The cost is \$12.00 per student.

### *ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview*

The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is a standardized oral interview developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures (ACTFL). It is a structured conversation and role-play between an OPI-trained interviewer and the person whose speaking skills are being assessed. This can be an in-person conversation or conducted on the phone. The language learner is asked to perform tasks of varying difficulty. After the OPI, the trained interviewer rates the speaker's skills using the criteria set in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (e.g. Novice-High, Intermediate-Mid, Pre-Advanced). An OPI is available in over 50 languages. It costs \$134.00 per student.

### *ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test*

The ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) is a standardized test for global assessment of functional writing ability in a language. The ACTFL WPT is a vehicle that measures how well a person spontaneously writes in a language (without access to dictionaries or grammar references) by comparing his/her performance of specific writing tasks with the criteria stated in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The WPT is available in over 50 languages. The cost is \$65 per student.

## **G. PROCESS FOR DISTRICTS**

The process for awarding Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificates is determined by the local education agencies using the standards set by the state. Any district choosing to award this student recognition must meet the designated proficiency standards and determine that proficiency using the suggested or comparable proficiency assessments so that the integrity of the program is equitable as applied statewide.

### *Earning multiple certificates*

There is no limit to the number of certificates that a student may earn in different languages. The certificate program is intended to recognize and motivate student interest in acquiring language proficiency. It is anticipated that for those students drawn to language learning, a Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate will be a significant motivator. Proficiency certificates could be the catalyst for a student to begin learning a language and persevere to attain the standard in that new language, perhaps in multiple languages.

## **H. CONCLUSION**

Establishment of Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificates is a proactive step in helping Minnesota work toward language learning as part of core K-12 education. In implementing a world language graduation requirement, the time and resources spent on the certificate program (creating assessments, procedures, community networking, teacher training,

etc.) will lay the foundation for embedding the requirement. In the meantime, the certificate will recognize the achievement of this valued learning goal. It is one step to develop a Minnesota citizenry with improved global literacy.

# MINNESOTA WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATES

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Professional Development

Professional development is needed to encourage teachers throughout the state to clearly understand the assessment process and know how to consistently administer the awarding of certificates in their districts.

- Develop a “train the trainer” model so that professional development is equitably available to all teachers and the earning of a Minnesota World Language Proficiency Certificate equally accessible to all K-12 students in the state
- Professional conference presentations
- Regional workshops
- Development of an online tutorial

### Assessment Bank

Assessments are needed for the less commonly taught languages and for Pre-Advanced proficiency level of all languages. The Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments can serve as models for expanding on the number of languages that can be assessed with a valid and reliable tool. Financial support can bring together the home language communities with the expertise of the education community to create valid and reliable assessments in several languages.

### Certificate

Create an official Minnesota World Language Certificate for school districts to use. The certificates that the governor’s office currently provides to school groups with the official Minnesota seal is an example.

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## APPENDIX A

### ACTFL FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

#### Description

The 1986 proficiency guidelines were developed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). They represent a hierarchy of global characterizations of integrated performance in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Each description is a representative, not an exhaustive, sample of a particular range of ability, and each level subsumes all previous levels, moving from simple to complex in an "all-before-and-more" fashion.

#### Stages

These guidelines identify stages of proficiency, as opposed to achievement. They do not measure what individuals achieve through specific classroom instruction, but assess what individuals can and cannot do. This is regardless of where, when, or how the language was learned or acquired; thus the words "learned" and "acquired" are used in the broadest sense. These guidelines are not based on a particular linguistic theory or pedagogical method, and are intended for global assessment.

### Listening

#### Listening: Novice-Low

Understanding is limited to occasional isolated words, such as cognates, borrowed words, and high-frequency social conventions. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.

#### Listening: Novice-Mid

Able to understand some short, learned utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends some words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands and courtesy formulae about topics that refer to basic personal information or the immediate physical setting. The listener requires long pauses for assimilation and periodically requests repetition and/or a slower rate of speech.

#### Listening: Novice-High

Able to understand short, learned utterances and some sentence-length utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands, and courtesy formulae. May require repetition, rephrasing, and/or a slowed rate of speech for comprehension.

#### Listening: Intermediate-Low

Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned elements in a limited number of content areas, particularly if strongly supported by the situational context. Content refers to basic personal background and needs, social conventions and routine tasks, such as getting meals and receiving simple instructions and directions. Listening tasks pertain primarily to spontaneous face-to-face conversations. Understanding is often uneven; repetition and rewording may be necessary. Misunderstandings in both main ideas and details arise frequently.

### **Listening: Intermediate-Mid**

Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned utterances on a variety of topics. Content continues to refer primarily to basic personal background and needs, social conventions and somewhat more complex tasks, such as lodging, transportation, and shopping. Additional content areas include some personal interests and activities, and a greater diversity of instructions and directions. Listening tasks not only pertain to spontaneous face-to-face conversations but also to short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech, such as simple announcements and reports over the media. Understanding continues to be uneven.

### **Listening: Intermediate-High / Pre-Advanced for K-12 Learners**

Able to sustain understanding over longer stretches of connected discourse on a number of topics pertaining to different times and places; however, understanding is inconsistent due to failure to grasp main ideas and/or details. Thus, while topics do not differ significantly from those of an Advanced level listener, comprehension is less in quantity and poorer in quality

## **Speaking**

### **General Description – Novice Speaking**

The Novice level is characterized by the ability to communicate minimally with learned material.

### **Speaking: Novice-Low**

Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.

### **Speaking: Novice-Mid**

Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor=s words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

### **Speaking: Novice-High**

Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so.

Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

### **General Description – Intermediate Speaking**

The Intermediate level is characterized by the speaker's ability to:

- create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements, though primarily in a reactive mode
- initiate, minimally sustain, and close in a simple way basic communicative tasks
- ask and answer questions.

### **Speaking: Intermediate-Low**

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

### **Speaking: Intermediate-Mid**

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs,

such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

### **Speaking: Intermediate-High / Pre-Advanced for K-12 Learners**

Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate-High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devices, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

## **Reading**

### **Reading: Novice-Low**

Able occasionally to identify isolated words and/or major phrases when strongly supported by context.

### **Reading: Novice-Mid**

Able to recognize the symbols of an alphabetic and/or syllabic writing system and/or a limited number of characters in a system that uses characters. The reader can identify an increasing number of highly contextualized words and/or phrases including cognates and borrowed words, where appropriate. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be required.

### **Reading: Novice-High**

Has sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read for instructional and directional purposes, standardized messages, phrases, or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps, and signs. At times, but not on a

consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.

**Reading: Intermediate-Low**

Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure, for example, chronological sequencing. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples include messages with social purposes and information for the widest possible audience, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.

**Reading: Intermediate-Mid**

Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple, connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.

**Reading: Intermediate-High / Pre-Advanced for K-12 Learners**

Able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.

**Writing**

**Writing: Novice-Low**

Writers at the Novice-Low level are able to form letters in an alphabetic system and can copy and produce isolated, basic strokes in languages that use syllabaries or characters. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they can reproduce from memory a very limited number of isolated words or familiar phrases, but errors are to be expected.

**Writing: Novice-Mid**

Writers at the Novice-Mid level are able to copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases, and reproduce from memory a modest number of isolated words and phrases in context. They can supply limited information on simple forms and documents, and other basic biographical information, such as names, numbers, and nationality. Novice-Mid writers exhibit a high degree of accuracy when writing on well-practiced, familiar topics using limited formulaic language. With less familiar topics, there is a marked decrease in accuracy. Errors in spelling or in the representation of symbols may be frequent. There is little evidence of functional writing skills. At this level, the writing may be difficult to understand even by those accustomed to reading the texts of non-natives.

**Writing: Novice-High**

Writers at the Novice-High level are able to meet limited basic practical writing needs

using lists, short messages, postcards, and simple notes, and to express themselves within the context in which the language was learned, relying mainly on practiced material. The writing is generally writer-centered and is focused on common, discrete elements of daily life. Novice-High writers are able to recombine learned vocabulary and structures to create simple sentences on very familiar topics, but the language they produce may only partially communicate what is intended. Control of features of the Intermediate level is not sustained due to inadequate vocabulary and/or grammar. Novice-High writing is often comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-natives, but gaps in comprehension may occur.

### **Writing: Intermediate-Low**

Writers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to meet some limited practical writing needs. They can create statements and formulate questions based on familiar material. Most sentences are recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures. These are short and simple conversational-style sentences with basic subject-verb-object word order. They are written mostly in present time with occasional and often incorrect use of past or future time. Writing tends to be a few simple sentences, often with repetitive structure. Vocabulary is limited to common objects and routine activities, adequate to express elementary needs. Writing is somewhat mechanistic and topics are limited to highly predictable content areas and personal information tied to limited language experience. There may be basic errors in grammar, word choice, punctuation, spelling, and in the formation and use of non-alphabetic symbols. When Intermediate-Low writers attempt to perform writing tasks at the Advanced level, their writing will deteriorate significantly and their message may be left incomplete. Their writing is understood by natives used to the writing of non-natives, although additional effort may be required.

### **Writing: Intermediate-Mid**

Writers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to meet a number of practical writing needs. They can write short, simple communications, compositions, descriptions, and requests for information in loosely connected texts that are based on personal preferences, daily routines, common events, and other topics related to personal experiences and immediate surroundings. Most writing is framed in present time, with inconsistent references to other time frames. The writing style closely resembles the grammar and lexicon of oral discourse. Writers at the Intermediate-Mid level show evidence of control of syntax in non-complex sentences and in basic verb forms, and they may demonstrate some ability to use grammatical and stylistic cohesive elements. This writing is best defined as a collection of discrete sentences and/or questions loosely strung together; there is little evidence of deliberate organization. Writers at the Intermediate-Mid level pay only sporadic attention to the reader of their texts; they focus their energies on the production of the writing rather than on the reception the text will receive. When Intermediate-Mid writers attempt Advanced-level writing tasks, the quality and/or quantity of their writing declines and the message may be unclear. Intermediate-Mid writers can be understood readily by natives used to the writing of non-natives.

### **Writing: Intermediate-High / Pre-Advanced for K-12 Learners**

Writers at the Intermediate-High level are able to meet all practical writing needs such as taking notes on familiar topics, writing uncomplicated letters, simple summaries, and compositions related to work, school experiences, and topics of current and general interest. Intermediate-High writers connect sentences into paragraphs using a limited number of cohesive devices that tend to be repeated, and with some breakdown in one or more features of the Advanced level. They can write simple descriptions and narrations of paragraph length on everyday events and situations in different time frames, although with some inaccuracies and inconsistencies. For example, they may be unsuccessful in their use of paraphrase and elaboration and/or inconsistent in the use of

appropriate major time markers, resulting in a loss in clarity. In those languages that use verbal markers to indicate tense and aspect, forms are not consistently accurate. The vocabulary, grammar, and style of Intermediate-High writers essentially correspond to those of the spoken language. The writing of an Intermediate-High writer, even with numerous and perhaps significant errors, is generally comprehensible to natives not used to the writing of non-natives, but gaps in comprehension may occur.

Source: Originally published as: American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1985). *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*. Speaking revised 1999. Writing revised 2001. Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: ACTFL Materials Center. In public domain.

## Appendix B

### Foreign Language Institute Scale of Language Difficulty

The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the Department of State has compiled approximate learning expectations for a number of languages based on the length of time it takes to achieve professional level speaking and reading proficiencies. The list is limited to languages taught at the Foreign Service Institute. The class hour numbers are based on courses taught at the Foreign Service Institute to learners almost 40 years old, native speakers of English and persons with a good aptitude for formal language study plus knowledge of several languages. Classes are no larger than 6 students and much self-directed study is required.

The chart gives a relative comparison of the amount of time needed to develop proficiency in different languages, in other words a comparative level of difficulty for English speakers to learn these languages.

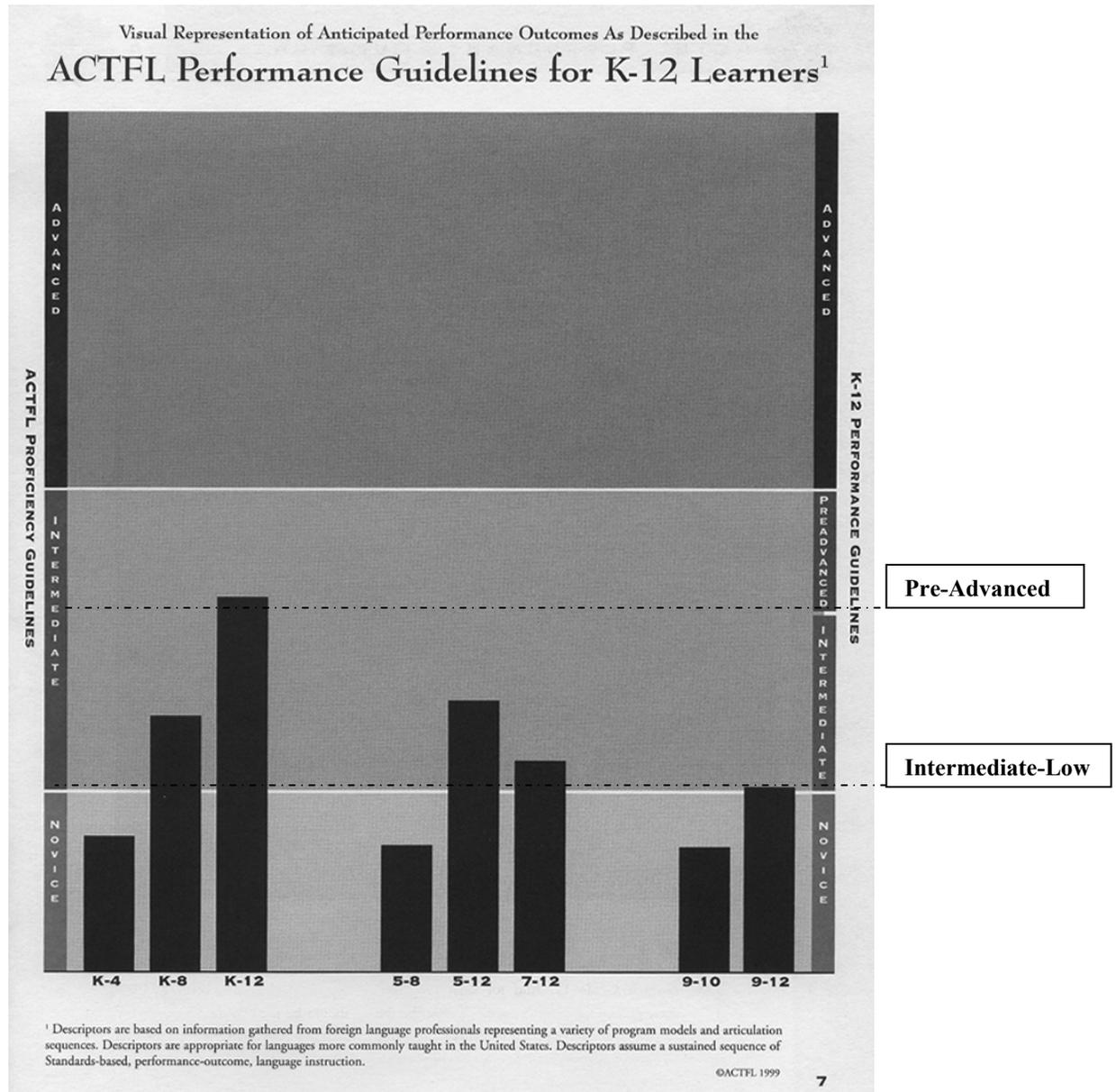
Language Difficulty	
<b>Languages closely related to English</b> <i>575-600 class hours</i>	Danish, Dutch, French, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish German (750 class hours)
<b>Languages with significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English</b> <i>1100 class hours</i>	Indonesian, Malaysian, and Swahili (900 class hours) Amharic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Croatian, Czech, *Estonian, *Finnish, *Georgian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, *Hungarian, Icelandic, Khmer, Lao, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, *Mongolian, Nepali, Pashto, Persian (Dari, Farsi, Tajik), Polish, Russian, Serbian, Sinhalese, Slovak, Slovenian, *Tagalog, *Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, *Vietnamese, Xhosa, Zulu
<b>Languages which are exceptionally difficult for native English speakers</b> <i>2200 class hours</i>	Arabic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin

- Languages preceded by asterisks are typically somewhat more difficult for native English speakers to learn than other languages in the same category.

Source: Nation Virtual Translation Center. "Languages of the World" retrieved from <http://www.nvtc.gov/lotw/months/november/learningExpectations.html>.

## APPENDIX C

### K-12 WORLD LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AND ANTICIPATED PROFICIENCY OUTCOMES



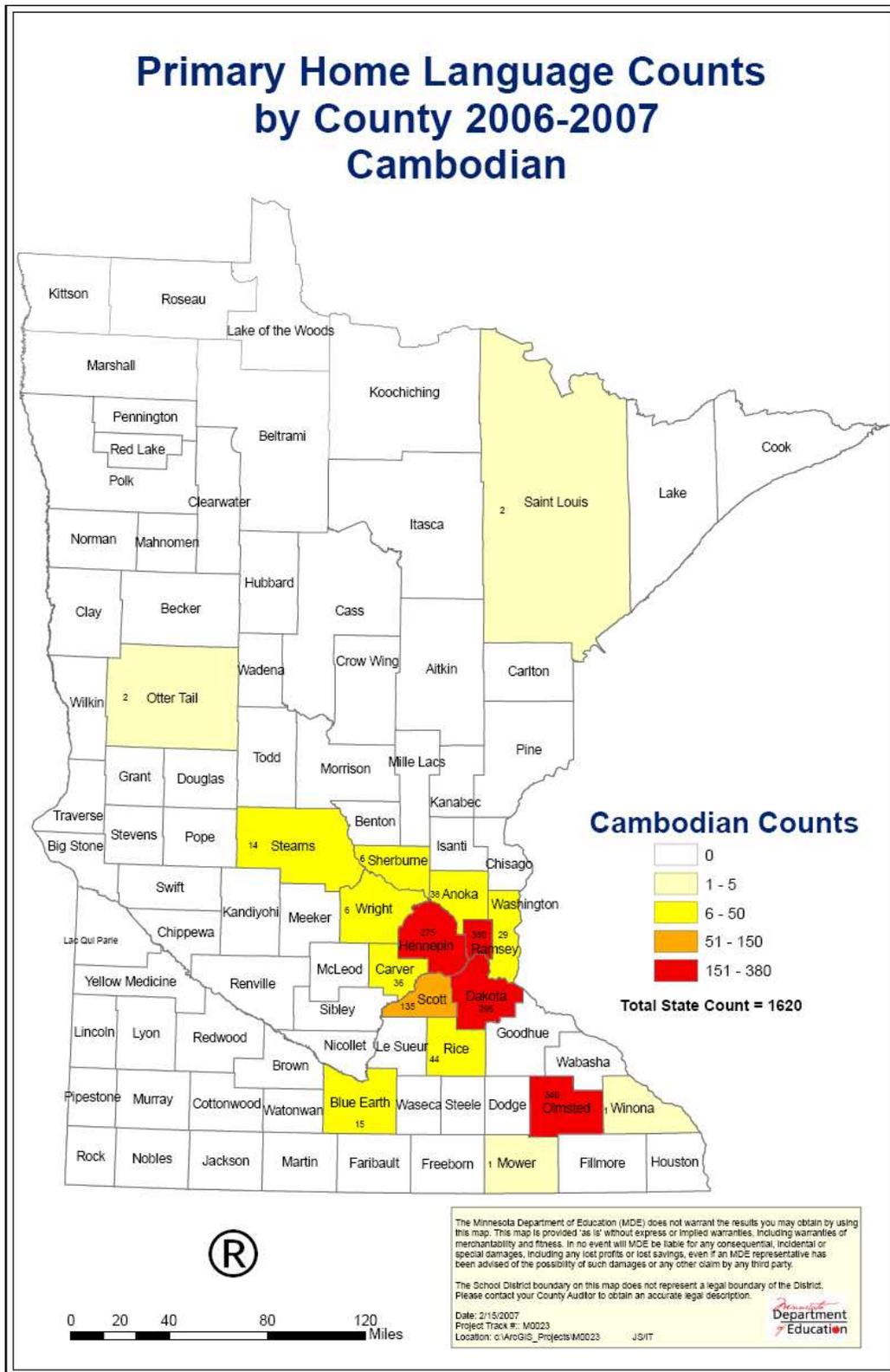
Reprinted with permission from ACTFL

Source: American Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures (1999). *Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners*. Alexandria, Virginia: Author.



## APPENDIX D

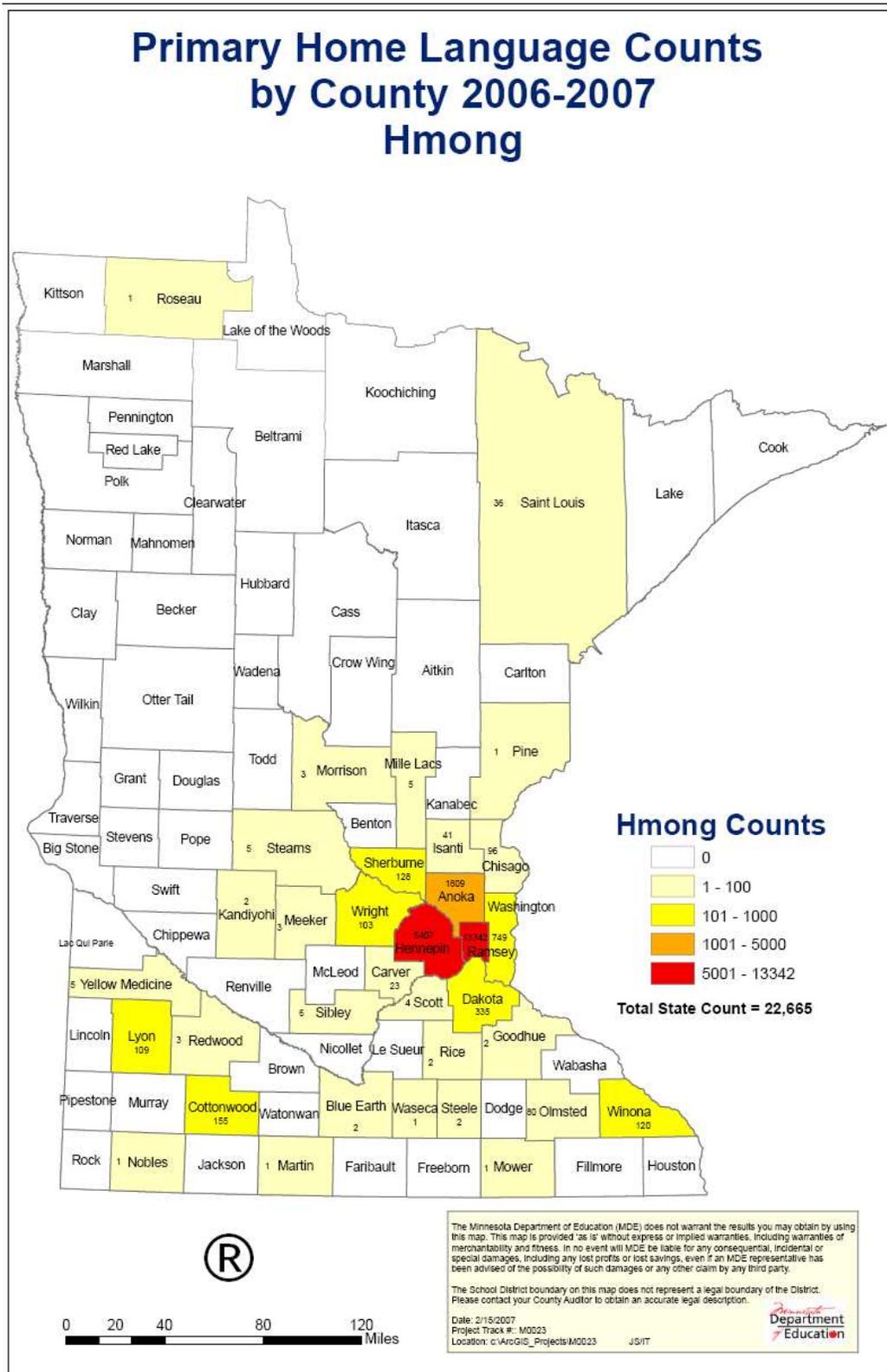
### HOME LANGUAGE SCHOOL POPULATIONS IN MINNESOTA



Source: Minnesota Department of Education, [www.state.education.mn.us](http://www.state.education.mn.us). Retrieved Feb. 5, 2008

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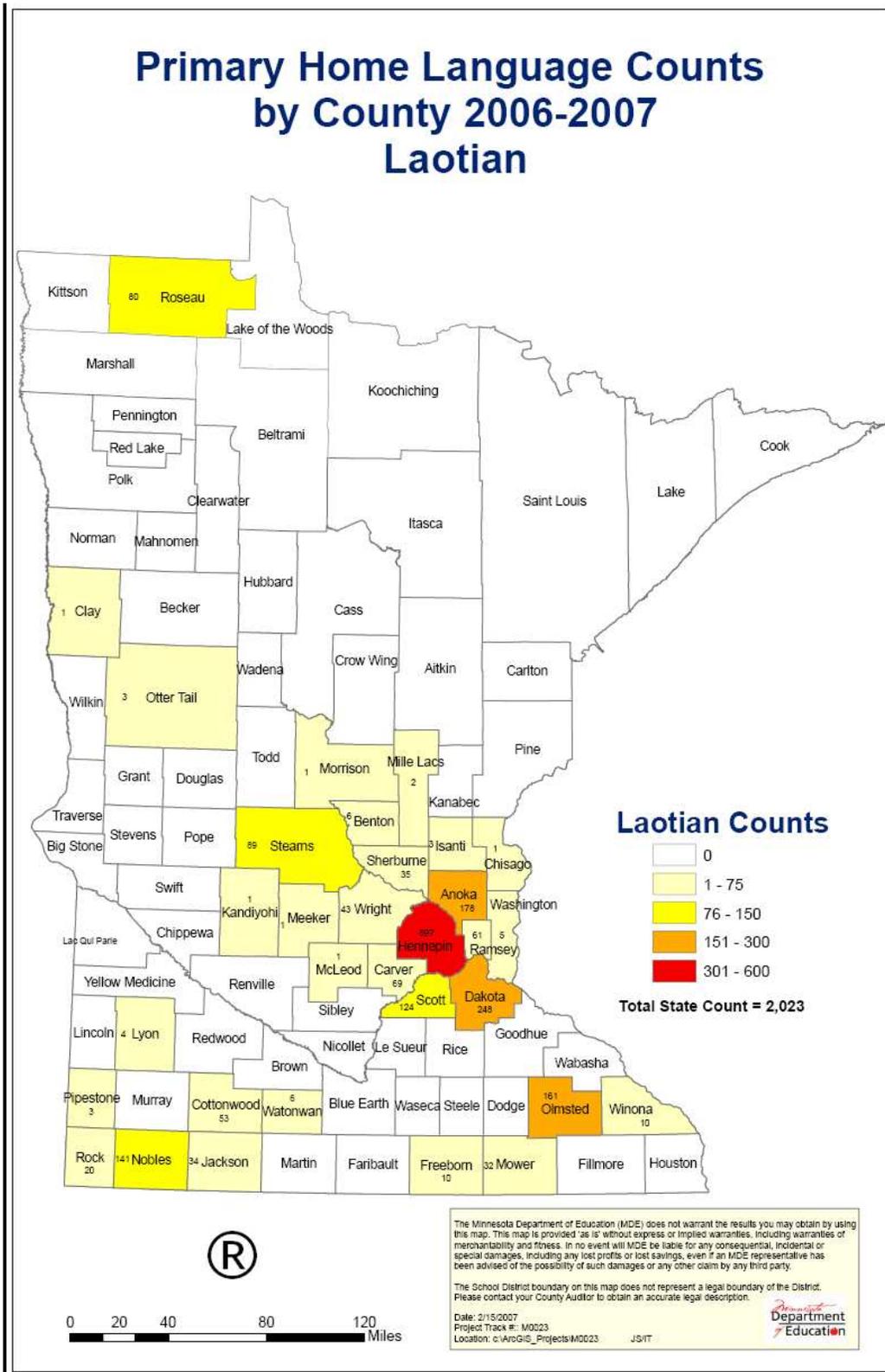
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Source: Minnesota Department of Education, [www.state.education.mn.us](http://www.state.education.mn.us). Retrieved Feb. 5, 2008

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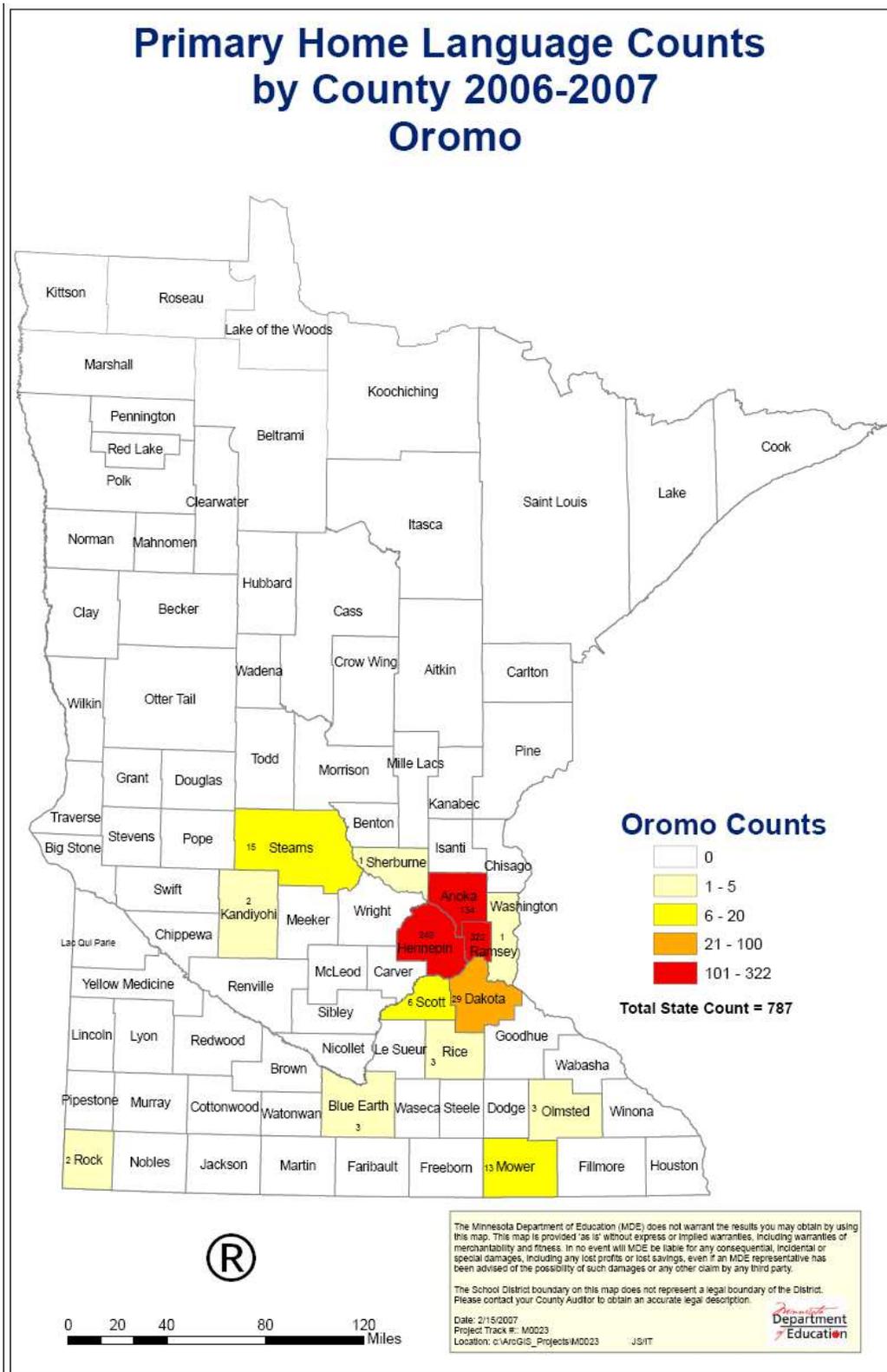
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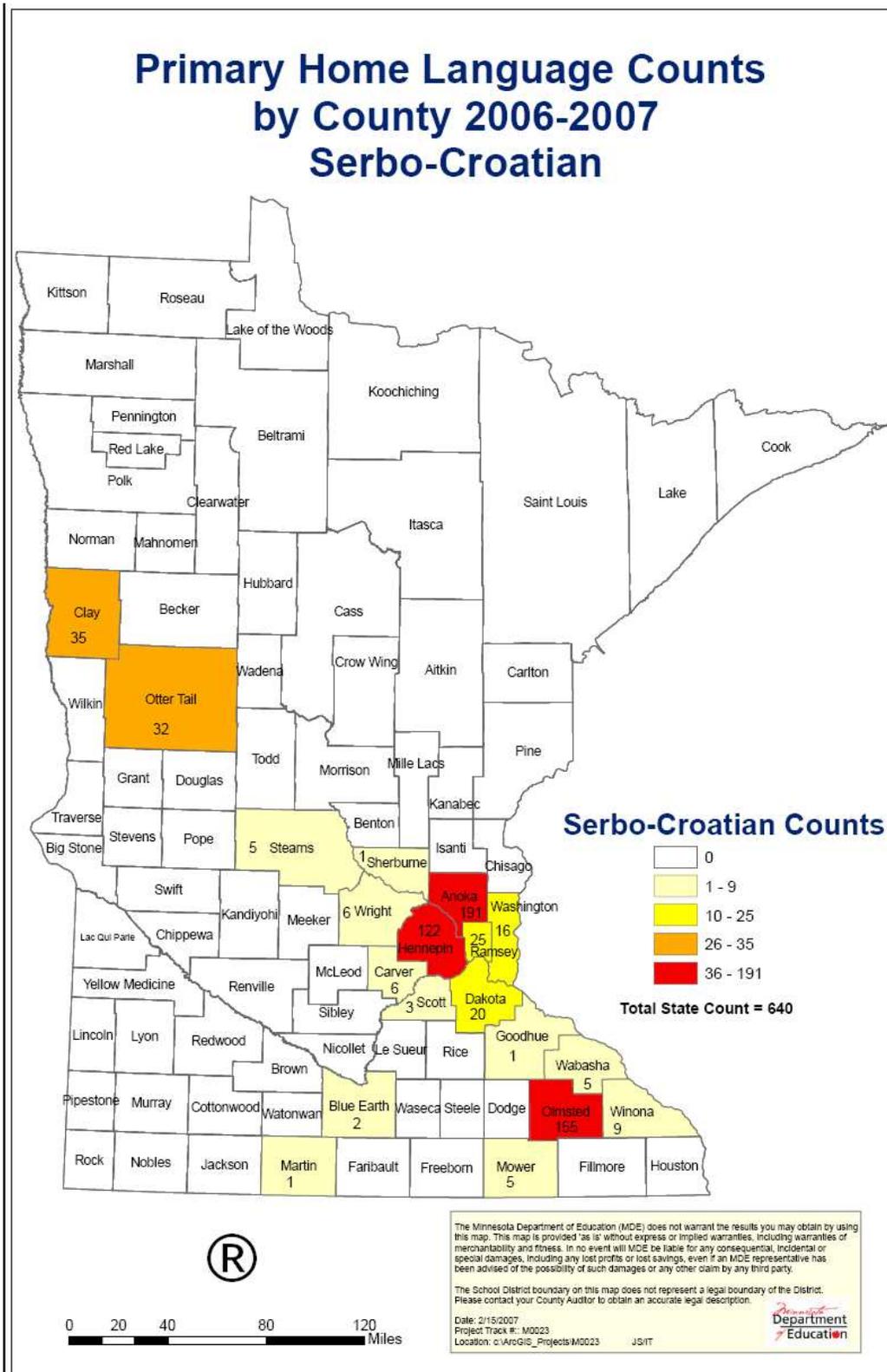


Source: Minnesota Department of Education, [www.state.education.mn.us](http://www.state.education.mn.us). Retrieved Feb. 5, 2008



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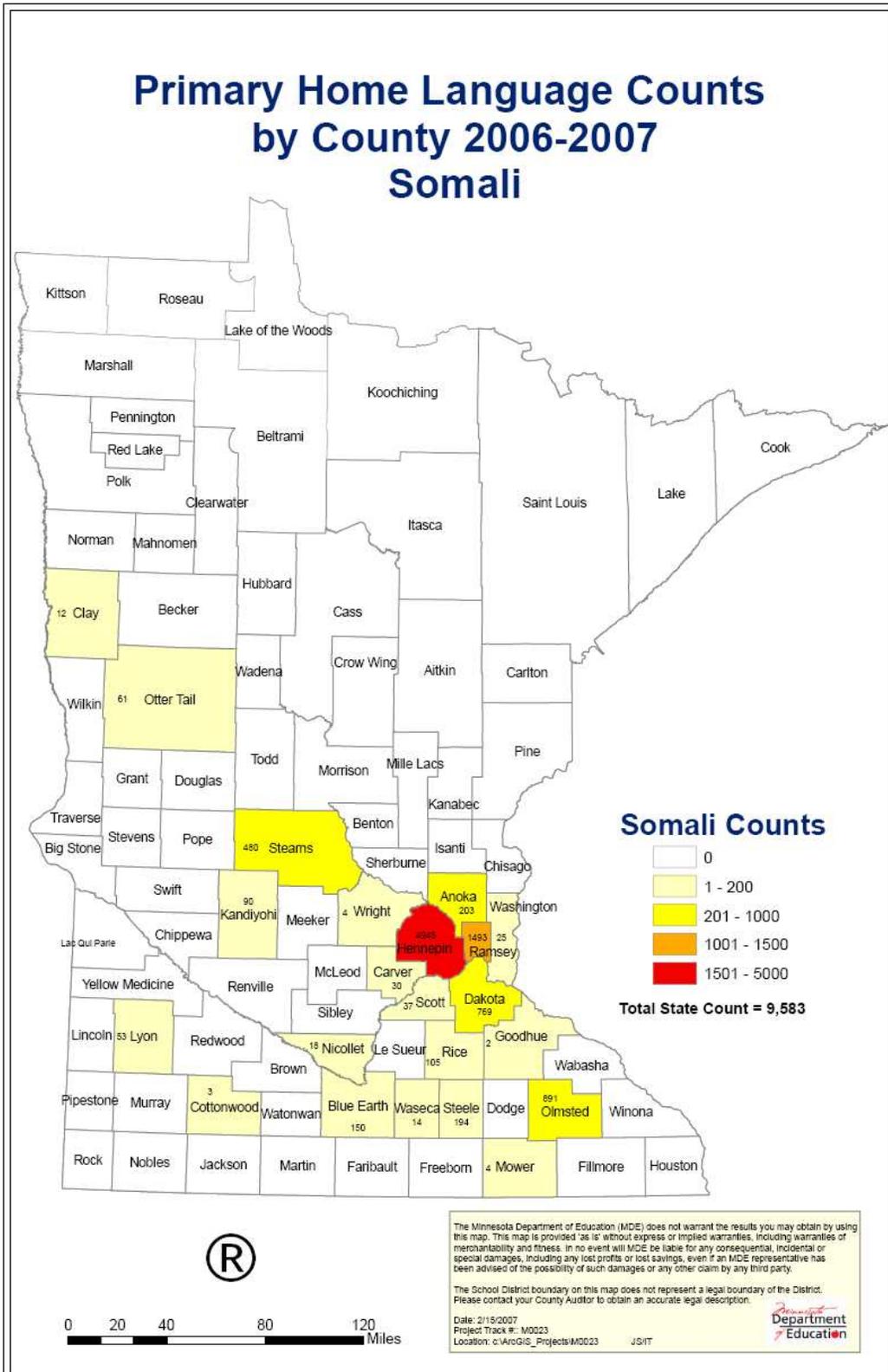
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Source: Minnesota Department of Education, [www.state.education.mn.us](http://www.state.education.mn.us). Retrieved Feb. 5, 2008

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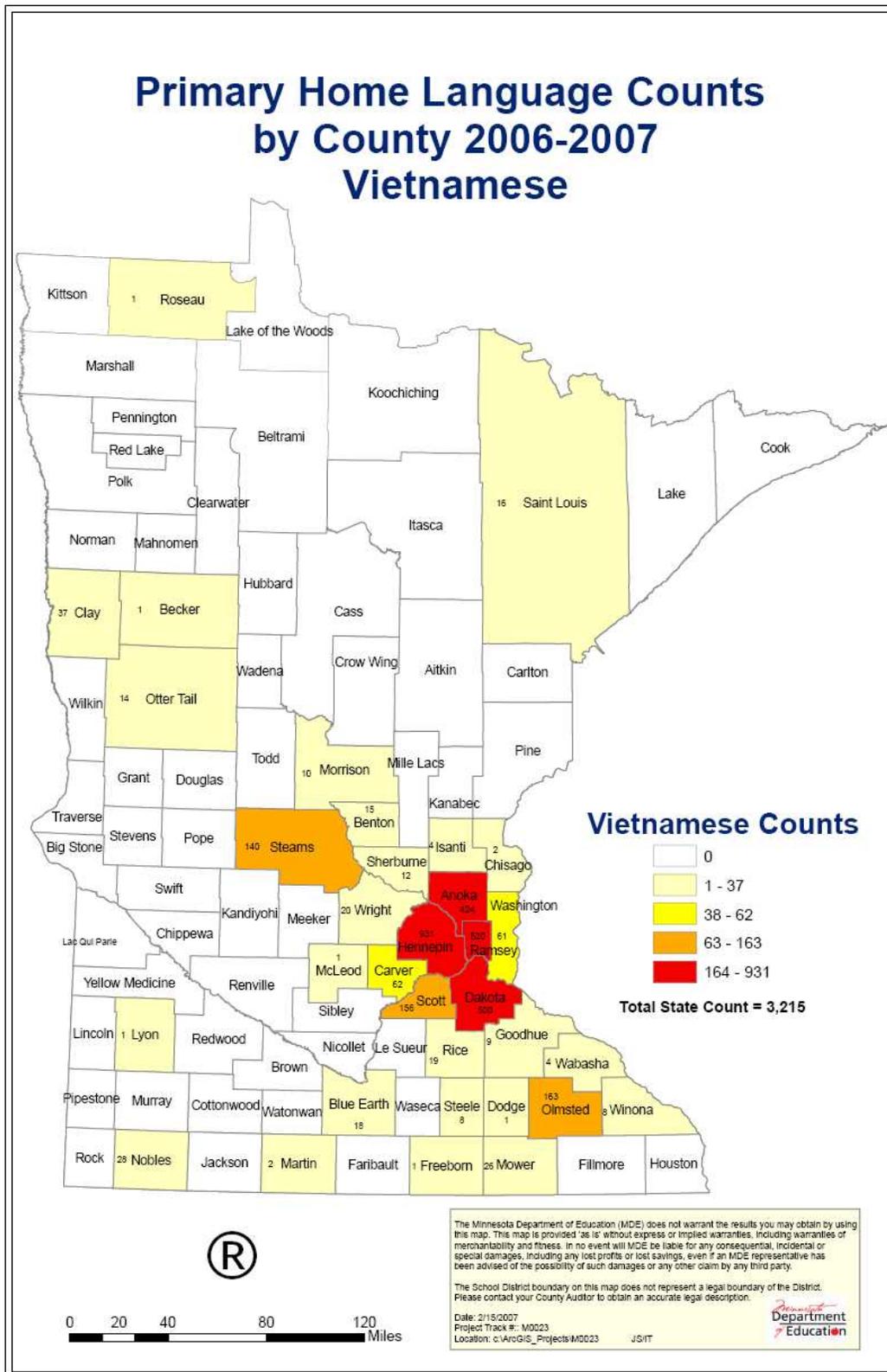


Source: Minnesota Department of Education, [www.state.education.mn.us](http://www.state.education.mn.us). Retrieved Feb. 5, 2008



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